

# **AWARD INTERVENTION REPORT ON A FIVE-WEEK STUDY IN PARADISE VALLEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT, ARIZONA**

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**Project Research and Training**  
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## Introduction

AWARD Reading is a K-3 literacy program that fully integrates technology and print to accelerate reading achievement for all students. The program consists of over 300 narrative and informational texts. The traditional print component is matched with the same texts in digital format and over 800 interactive skills activities delivered on the internet. The program also has phonics components—alphabet (K), letter combinations (Grade 1), and word families (Grade 1).

Students show a high-level of interest when technology is partnered with print. This transfers into their instructional experiences whether in small groups or as an independent literacy activity. Literacy development needs a sound framework and AWARD provides this with scaffolded skills instruction.

A recent year-long research study conducted by Dr. Cathy Collins Block and Dr. John N. Mangieri in New York City schools found that students using AWARD produced positive results whether they were ELLs or Title I students, and whether the program was used as an after-school, push-in, pull-out, or self contained model. (See Appendix 6 for full report.)

## Proposal

Paradise Valley Unified School District reviewed the New York City research report and sought to use AWARD as an intervention package containing technology and print to look for evidence of the program's success in Paradise Valley Unified School District. However, unlike New York, the timeline was only five weeks.

Kathy Norris, Title 1 Coordinator, Paradise Valley Unified School District, met with AWARD Reading representatives and agreed to a proposal to conduct a five-week study of a 30-minute intervention program outside of the literacy block, which uses the Harcourt Storytown, by using AWARD Reading on a daily basis as a pull-out session for chosen students.

Kathy Norris suggested schools with low-achieving students to participate in the study. Two were selected that could guarantee more than three computers per classroom for the intervention students to work on daily.

The principals of the two selected schools chose one or two classes from kindergarten and Grade 2 to take part in the study. This totaled three classes altogether. (One K-1 class, and two Grade 2 classes.)

The teachers selected their five lowest achieving students to receive the AWARD Reading instruction for the 25 days of the study. This totaled 15 students.

Richard Allington believes the smaller the group, the more likely the intervention will succeed (*What Really Matters in Response to Intervention*, Allyn & Bacon. 2009).

...we find a near unanimous agreement that very small instructional groups or tutorials are needed (Allington, 2006; Denton, Vaughn, & Fletcher, 2003; Foorman & Torgeson, 2001; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2005; McEneaney, Lose, & Schwartz, 2006).

March 2010	3–4 Teacher training 4–5 Pre-tests 8–31 Study (vacation dates are included)
April 2010	1–30 Study (vacation dates are included)
May 2010	1–3 Study 3–4 Post-tests 10 Report due

## Procedures

Approval to conduct the research investigation was given by Kathy Norris. Following this approval, the schools in the study were identified and an explanation of the AWARD program was provided to the school administrators and teachers.

Kathy Norris, worked closely with the AWARD consultant (Kim Kirkpatrick) to schedule the training, testing and logistics of implementing the program in the two selected classes.

AWARD Reading is a comprehensive, balanced literacy curriculum program that partners print and technology to deliver literacy outcomes to 21st-century students. Students use technology with text in the program every day. The following components are part of the daily instruction.

- Sequential learning
- Phonics instruction
- Explicit instruction
- Differentiation options
- Tools to provide feedback to parents and students
- Computer-assisted skills-based assessment
- Instruction based on research

### **Adjustment of levels for Intervention**

*Kindergarten* students worked on Red level.

*Grade 2* students worked on Green and Purple levels (one group on each).  
(Color levels were matched to the students' DRA levels.)

See the correlation chart (in the Appendix).

## Training

The teachers involved in the study met for a two-three hour professional development session with the AWARD consultant.

### Training Plan

#### *Overview of AWARD*

Participants learn how to recognize and use the components of the program, a hands-on experience

#### *Model the AWARD Program*

AWARD consultants support teachers with an understanding of the AWARD Program for intervention

#### *Implementation*

Participants learn to integrate technology daily into the AWARD Program to enhance small group instruction

Management plans will be shared to support a rotation of computer access for students.

#### *Debriefing*

Participants have the opportunity to clarify and share ideas.

The On-line sample is shared during this presentation. Teachers are asked to ensure students in the study have computer access using AWARD for at least 15 minutes per day out of the 30 minutes allocated for intervention.

## Follow-up Visit

The AWARD consultant facilitated a walk-through visit midway through the five-week study to answer any questions. She found the teachers were committed to supporting students and they reported that students were engaged and enjoyed working on AWARD daily. There had been some technology problems but the computers were effectively running the program and teachers had access to the number of computers they needed so that intervention students could use AWARD for at least 15 minutes each day. The teachers had been successful at integrating technology with group reading. They were focused on meeting the needs of their students.

### **A research-based design**

The model for the small group intervention was a daily 30-minute design, based on one in Richard Allington's *What Really Matters in Response to Intervention*.

- 20 minutes of reading appropriate new texts and rereading previously read texts
- 5 minutes of word work or phonological skills work
- 5 minutes of work on comprehension skills and strategies (p. 67)

## Student Timetable

### Daily model (30–40 minutes allocated)

5–10 minutes	<b>Shared Reading – Genre Piece</b>
5–10 minutes	<b>Small Group Instruction</b> Group Reading of text and modeling activities online
15 minutes	<b>Independent Learning</b> Independent time on computers to practice reading and skills activities

Allington states,

What will be absolutely critical is that in this redesign we must ensure that reading volume is dramatically increased if accelerated reading growth is the intended outcome. (p. 69)

In the AWARD model (see above), the small group instruction and independent learning provide a total of 20 minutes of reading appropriate new texts and rereading previously read texts in print and on the computers.

## Administration of the Tests

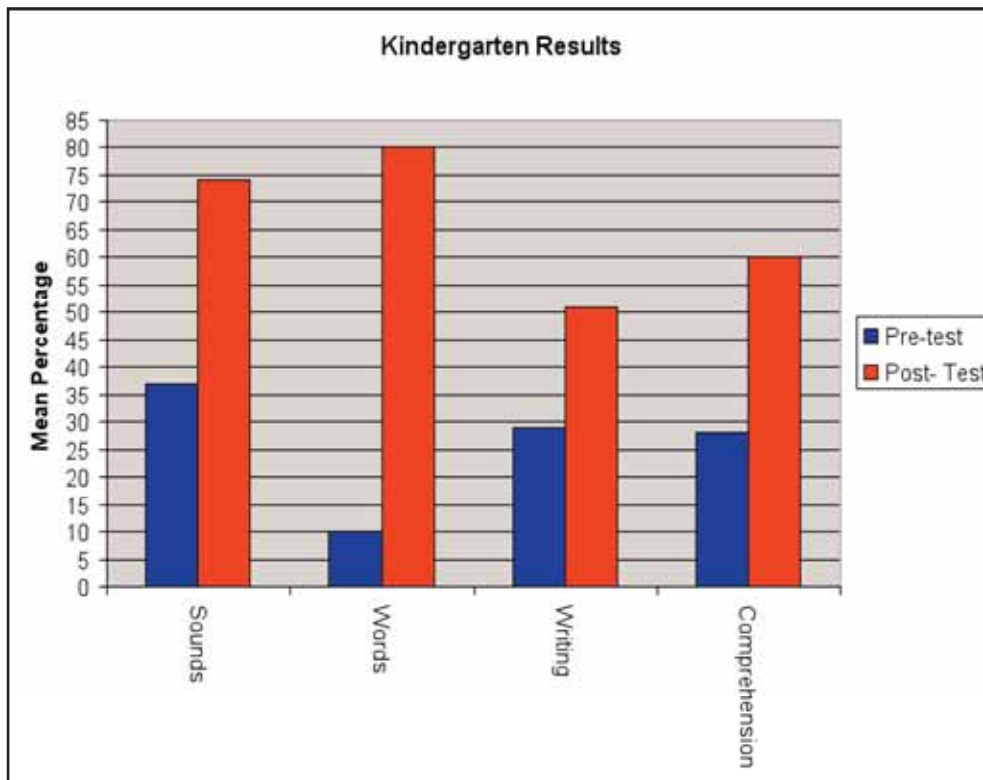
The study was for five weeks of instruction, with two days allocated for pre-testing and two days for post-testing.

One consultant was trained by AWARD in testing procedure (see Appendix 3 for pre- and post-test sample booklet). The tests were selected from the AWARD formative assessment computer program to match DRA levels of students (supplied by teachers). All testing was done online (awardreadingonline.com) on computers and the results were saved to a database where they could be printed out as raw results or as a bar graph. (see Appendix for a sample printout).

The testing personnel followed a timetable drawn up by Kathy Norris to ensure each student completed the tests online. Each test took approximately 15 minutes.

Pre-test and post-test results were printed and delivered to an independent evaluator for analysis and a final report.

## Results



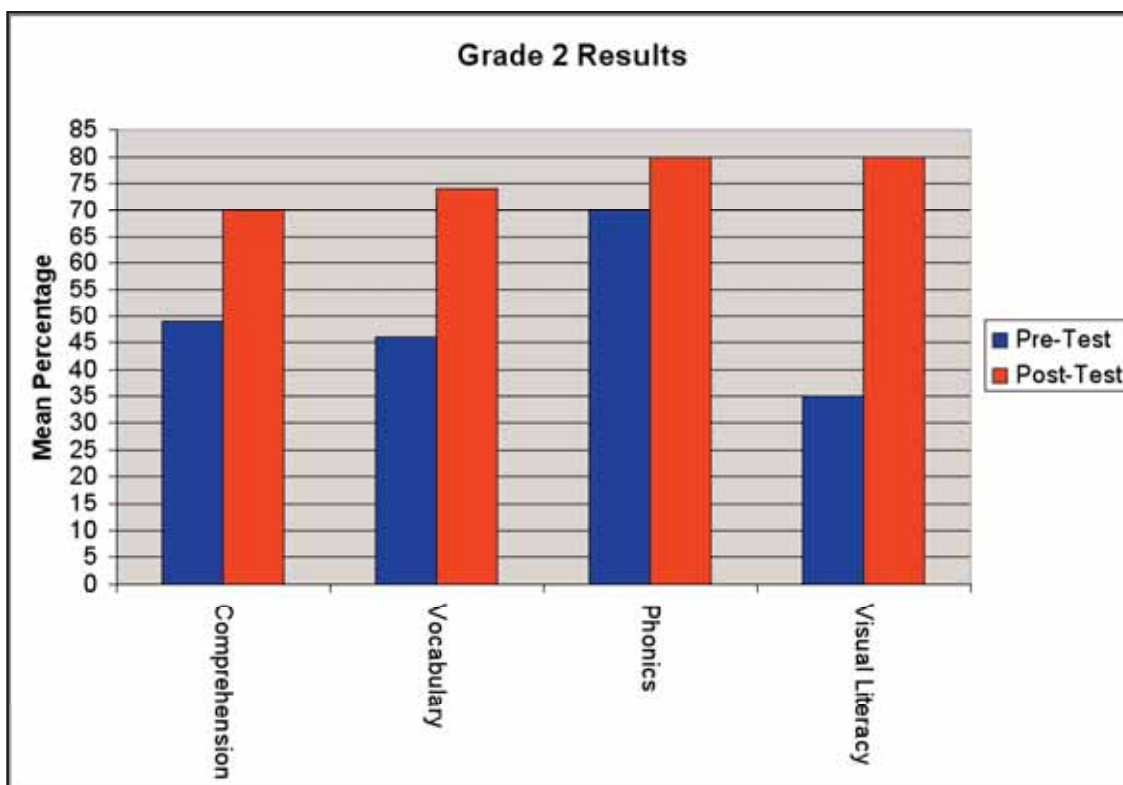
Five Kindergarten students were assessed at Yellow level. The AWARD program was implemented for four weeks and two days with these students as the teacher was absent for three days of the pilot study. One child was absent for three days.

The results show a positive improvement in all areas. All students improved their sounds score by between 17% and 67%. Two students scored 100%.

There was an outstanding improvement in the words scores with all students making a positive shift. Two students showed an improvement of 100% between their pre- and post-tests.

Four students demonstrated an improvement in their writing score—the most significant individual improvement being 57%.

Four of the students increased their comprehension score by between 20% and 60%.



Ten Grade 2 students were assessed at Orange and Gold levels. The graph shows the combined results.

Six of the students had absences of one to four days over the five-week period. The teacher of one group was absent for three days.

Nine students improved or retained their comprehension scores. The improvement ranged from between 12% and 75%.

Nine students improved their vocabulary scores. Three students scored 100%. There was a significant improvement of between 20% and 80%.

Nine students improved or retained their phonics score. The most significant individual improvement was from a pre-test score of 0% to 80% in the post-test. Other shifts ranged from 10% to 60%.

There was an outstanding overall improvement in Visual Literacy of 45%. Six students scored 100% in the post-test. All students improved or retained their scores.



## Observations

1. The study was undertaken by teachers who were new to AWARD and had only had 2 hours of professional development in the use of AWARD Reading..
2. The basal instruction used by the two schools had little or no technology . In contrast teachers found themselves using technology and print daily for this intervention, a new experience for many of them.
3. The students were all struggling readers.
4. The timeline of five weeks for instruction was limited compared to the Nassau and New York studies. (See Appendices 5 and 6.)
5. The size of the student samples at some reading levels was 4 or less and therefore not a valid representation for a study. (Ref. Prof. W. Elley)
6. One teacher was absent for three days. Some students were absent for up to four days.

## Conclusions

This evaluation has shown significant improvement in the areas assessed. It demonstrates the effectiveness of the AWARD program in teaching students to read in an interesting and supported way. It produced impressive gains in the students' ability to read a wider range of words, to comprehend what they read, and in their visual literacy.

The program was trialed over a short period of five weeks. There is every indication from this pilot study that if the AWARD program was implemented over a year, outstanding progress would be achieved.

Wendy Dorset

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